

Support for the 3rd Annual Exeter River Alewife Festival

A Final Report to

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project

Submitted by

Exeter River Local Advisory Committee
c/o Rockingham Planning Commission
156 Water Street
Exeter, NH 03833

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Executive Summary

With support from the NH Estuaries Project (NHEP), the Exeter River Local Advisory Committee (ERLAC) held the 3rd Annual Exeter River Alewife Festival on May 31, 2003 in downtown Exeter. NHEP funding enabled ERLAC and the Festival Planning Committee to print and distribute posters and cards advertising the Festival, purchase newspaper advertisements and arrange opportunities for the press to learn more about the event. In addition, ERLAC members worked with area newspapers to write and print eleven articles highlighting aspects of the river and the watershed.

Introduction

The Exeter River Local Advisory Committee (ERLAC) is a voluntary committee made up of residents from the ten Exeter River watershed communities. ERLAC began meeting in April, 1996 and has met monthly since that time to develop and implement a watershed management plan.

Public education and outreach are ERLAC's most important goals and organizing the Annual Exeter River Alewife Festival is a large component of the group's education strategy. Held in May or June in downtown Exeter, the Festival provides an opportunity for over two dozen environmental and natural resource management organizations to engage the public on issues important to the river and the Great Bay estuary. The 2003 Festival attracted over 600 people and provided ERLAC with a great deal of press coverage. Support from local governments and area merchants has been very strong and the Festival has been embraced by many groups as Exeter's "spring fling".

Project Goals and Objectives

The goals of this project were to increase attendance at the Alewife Festival and to provide ERLAC with an opportunity to educate the general public on an on-going basis. The objectives set out to meet these goals included printing and distributing posters and cards advertising the Festival, purchasing Festival advertisements in area newspapers, and starting a monthly column on the river and watershed in area newspapers.

Activities

With support from NHEP, ERLAC and the Festival Planning Committee completed the following activities:

- Established the 2003 Festival Planning Committee, including representatives from Seacoast Arts Association, watershed historical societies and Conservation Commissions.
- Organized and held eleven meetings of the Festival Planning Committee.
- Contacted Festival participants to share relevant information.
- Met with editors from area newspapers to discuss press coverage before, during and after the Festival, and review topics for ERLAC's monthly newspaper column.
- Worked with graphic artist Cathy Arakelian to develop, print, and distribute 50 Festival posters and 2,000 cards, and design the newspaper advertisement.
- Held the 3rd Annual Exeter River Alewife Festival on May 31, 2003.
- Submitted eleven articles on topics relating to the Exeter River and the watershed to area newspapers.

Results and Discussion

ERLAC and the Festival Planning Committee have no doubt that the paid newspaper advertisements, distribution of posters and cards, and monthly newspaper articles were instrumental to the success of the 2003 Festival. With attendance estimates of 600 people and more, the Festival was a success for ERLAC and for exhibitors. In addition to the several newspaper articles about ERLAC and the event, ERLAC gained two new committee members via the Festival. These members are active participants on the 2004 Festival Planning Committee.

Conclusions

ERLAC and the Festival Planning Committee are already hard at work on the 4th Annual Exeter River Alewife Festival, to be held June 5, 2004 along Swasey Parkway in downtown Exeter. The Festival had provided the perfect opportunity for ERLAC to establish and sustain partnerships with other stakeholders interested in the long-term stewardship of the river, Great Bay and the watershed.

Recommendations for Future Work

ERLAC will continue to organize and host the Annual Exeter River Alewife Festival and submit monthly newspaper columns to area newspapers. In addition, ERLAC will partner with Festival participants on educational programs in addition to the Festival. These programs will include workshops on land protection with the Rockingham Land Trust, walking tours to identify invasive plant species with NH Fish and Game and UNH Cooperative Extension, and an annual inventory of the river corridor with watershed Conservation Commissions and Trout Unlimited.

Appendix

- 2003 Festival Poster
- 2003 Festivals Palm Card
- Newspaper Articles
- Newspaper Advertisements



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New Hampshire Estuaries Project

The swamp maples are beginning to show their fall color of red, so the change of seasons cannot be far behind. While the summer ends, the best season for outdoor recreational activities begins with cool weather and cool colors. The Exeter River is a place to consider to fill your time away from any hectic schedule.

Each spring, Greg Lowell of Chester sets out in his canoe to travel the Exeter River from Chester to Exeter. The trip is not an easy one, but the river always seems to challenge Greg's spirit of adventure and his curiosity to see what has happened in and around the river over the course of a year. Greg has written a short journal of his "town by town" cruise that hopefully will encourage you to visit the river yourself. Here, an excerpt from his journal describes the river's wonders:

"The Exeter River, from its origins in Sandown and Chester until it flows over the dam in Exeter, offers a wide variety of recreational uses. Fishing, bird-watching, hunting, and canoeing and kayaking are the primary recreational opportunities, and there are several places for taking a swim on hot summer days. While there are homes and development along many parts of the watershed, there are many spots where a canoeist or kayaker can enjoy solitude and many glimpses of wildlife.

"Anyone taking a canoe or kayak downriver is strongly urged to consult the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) Canoe and Kayak Guide for details on water levels, portages, and access points.

"Sandown and Chester - In its upper reaches, the river is little more than a stream. In many places it is barely navigable by canoers or kayakers. In the stretch from Chester to Sandown, the river is narrow and shallow. The lone exception is Lily Pond in Sandown - an impoundment that offers fishing for typical warm-water species like bass, pickerel, and perch. The pond is clearly marked on most maps and is accessible for car top boats. Below Lily Pond, the river is mostly unnavigable until it reaches a large swamp. The marsh can be accessed from Fremont Road, in Chester by paddling upstream against the current and over beaver dams. The marsh offers excellent bird-watching year round and water fowling in the fall. Downstream from the bridge, the river becomes more navigable. In the past, the river was stocked with trout but it is unknown whether this practice continues.

"Raymond - The River comes close to Route 102 on the Chester-Raymond line and affords an easy access point for canoeists and fishermen. From here down to the mill pond in Fremont, the current picks up speed - especially in the spring. Blow-downs and beaver dams interrupt travel, but also afford several backwaters for fishing. Herons and ducks seem to start at every turn and beavers often change the river course.

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"Fremont - The river drops over ledges just above Fremont - the first sign of rapids on the river. The quick water holds trout in the spring, but warms quickly as it slows down and enters the mill pond. The pond holds bass and pickerel and more than a few ducks, herons, and geese. Kingfishers are omnipresent here and on many parts of the river. From the dam at the mill pond down to Rte. 107, the river zig-zags through a large swamp and can be hard to follow, but rewards the user with abundant bird life and a feeling of solitude. The Rte 107 bridge below the campground offers access. The river from here to the pond in Brentwood offers warm-water fishing and glimpses of basking turtles.

"Brentwood - From the dam at the pond in Brentwood to Cawley Falls, there are rapids that will require attention in high water, especially at put-in. The river here has trout fishing in the spring, although access is limited. Canoeists should not go under the Route 125 bridge as there is a 10-foot drop on the other side. The water below the falls is a popular fishing spot, as is the river from her to Exeter. The river is stocked with trout in the spring and attracts several anglers. Except for occasional blow-downs and low water in summer, the river can be floated. The area below the Pickpocket Dams offer fast-water fishing for trout for a long stretch. Alternating sandy bottom and rocky riffles make this section especially attractive for paddlers and fishermen.

Exeter - The river in Exeter – accessible at many points – is marked by a slower current, more backwaters, and opportunities for fishing and birding. Trout are stocked in the upper sections. The river widens considerably after it goes under Route 111 and paddlers can go either upstream from Exeter or downstream. There are riverside trails that offer opportunities for walking, wildlife watching, and swimming. Check with Phillips Exeter Academy for their policy on using trails on their land.

"The dam at the tidewater in Exeter marks the end of the river's 34-mile course. For those who take the time to explore, the Exeter River offers many recreational opportunities and a sense of wildness too often rare in southern New Hampshire."

The Exeter River is a special place that serves multiple uses and deserves to receive our attention and care. The Exeter River Corridor and Watershed Management Plan is "about people working together to understand what it takes to improve, maintain and enhance the quality of their watershed, and about charting a course that will ensure a healthy and viable river and watershed well into the future."

This column was written by the membership of the Exeter River Local Advisory Committee (ERLAC) with the support of the N.H. Estuaries Project. The members of ERLAC meet monthly and discuss issues about the Exeter River concerning water quantity and quality; wildlife habitats and natural communities; scenic, recreation and historic resources; and education and outreach. If you want more information about the Exeter River, call ERLAC at the Rockingham Planning Commission, at 778-0885.

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Sunday, June 1, 2003



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Alewife migration featured at Exeter festival

By MICHAEL GOOT

Staff Writer

EXETER — The environmental and cultural heritage of the Exeter River and its inhabitants was celebrated on Saturday with the third annual Alewife Festival.

The migratory fish species is the festival's namesake because of its important place in the town's history and its connection to salt and fresh water.

The festival was sponsored by the Exeter River Local Advisory Committee, a citizen's group with representatives from towns in the watershed. A couple of hundred people attended and toured the various exhibits in tents along Swasey Parkway.

The committee works to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, and scenic, recreational and historic resources through education and collaboration with other organizations and communities.

Theresa Walker of the Rockingham Planning Commission, who worked with festival organizers, said the goal is to create a "better appreciation and understanding of the Exeter River and the role that we all have to play in protecting it — not only the water quality, but the wildlife habitat."

The Exeter River Local Advisory Committee wanted to raise awareness of the river and decided to hold the event at the same time the fish were migrating upstream.

Alewives spend their adult life in the Atlantic Ocean but need fresh water to spawn, Walker said. The migrating process occurs for about six weeks every spring. The fish can be seen downtown at the recently refurbished fish ladder.

Walker said the device is basically a concrete tunnel that provides a series of incremental steps to help the alewives make the transition from saltwater to freshwater. The state Fish and Game Department recently rebuilt the ladder, which officials hope will attract more fish.

She said the committee tried to pull together several different groups for the event including artisans, historians and environmentalists, with the common theme being the river.

Activities included a musical performance by The Other Guys, tours of the ladder located next to the Dam View Restaurant, a presentation about wildlife habitat in the Exeter River watershed, and canoe and kayak races.

Matthew Thomas, historian for the Town of Fremont, said the river was home to historic and first-of-their-kind paper mills and industry.

"If it wasn't for this river, a lot of these towns would not have been settled as early as they were," he said.

Nate Hazen of Great Bay Coast Watch was explaining the monitoring volunteers do at 23 sites along the Great Bay and rivers leading into it during 10 months of the year.

The organization performs tests for fecal coliform, as well as salt content and turbidity. The information is entered into a database used by other researchers. If the volunteers spot an unusual reading, they will alert the Department of Environmental Services.

Matthew Tarr, of the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Service, wanted to shed light on some of the rare species living in the roughly 67 acres of habitat surrounding the Exeter River. These include the brook floater mussel and the wood turtle.

His advice for people is to "be familiar with what you have for wildlife habitat on your property" and be careful about what they dump down drains.

"Every drop that hits the ground, makes its way to the Exeter River and eventually to the ocean," he said.

Dave Kellam with the New Hampshire Estuaries Project was playing "Eel of Fortune" with a mock wheel and children had the opportunity to pet two live eels.

"I like how they feel," said Jack Crowe, 8, of Exeter.

Cheryl Rotondo of Exeter also enjoyed the festival with 9-year-old daughter Claudia Trafton.

"I think it's wonderful to provide an educational forum for people on what the waterway is," she said.



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The Exeter News-Letter.

Exeter to host alewife festival

BY RACHEL GRACE TOUSSAINT
newsletter@seacoastonline.com

EXETER - Every year, thousands of alewives migrate from the Atlantic Ocean to freshwater streams like the Exeter, Lamprey and Oyster rivers.

The alewife is a bony fish related to the herring family. They are primarily used for bait and fertilizer, but their migration has a much greater importance - it symbolizes the coming of spring.

And for the town of Exeter, it's a time for celebration.

On May 31, the town will hold its third annual Alewife Festival along the Swasey Parkway.

According to Theresa Walker of the Rockingham Planning Commission, the festival, organized by the Exeter River Local Advisory Committee and the RPC, celebrates and seeks to educate the public about the alewives and the Exeter River.

"We use this annual migration to raise awareness of the river, not only because of its recreational and historical qualities, but because it provides the townspeople with drinking water," said Walker.

The festival, free and open to the public, will kick off at 10 a.m. and promises fun activities for people of all ages. There will be live music by The Other Guys; a tour of the New Hampshire Fish and Game fish ladder (next to the Dam View Restaurant on Water Street); a canoe and kayak race along the Squamscott River; the unveiling of an 1835 historical map of the Exeter River; local art exhibits; children's activities; refreshments; and much more. Rain date in case of bad weather is June 1.

After the alewives migrate to fresh water, they spawn and then return to the Atlantic Ocean. The alewife has been such a constant in the town of Exeter for years that the fish is even on the town seal, according to the curator of the Exeter Historical Society, Barbara Rimkunas.

"Their notable feature is that they showed up every year, even when the salmon died out. Perhaps they symbolize persistence," said Rimkunas. "And I like having it on our town seal because it's an unusual fish." The society will

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also have a booth set up at the festival.

Other groups are recognizing the importance of the alewives and the Exeter River with grants to help fund the festival.

According to Walker, of the Planning Commission, the ERLAC received \$7,000 total in grant money from the New Hampshire Coastal Program, the N.H. Estuaries Project, and the N.H. Department of Environmental Services.

"The Exeter River is one of the tributaries of the Great Bay," said Walker.

"And these organizations feel strongly about keeping it in positive health." After the festival, she hopes the townspeople will feel this way, too.

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The Exeter News-Letter.

Alewives return to freshwater flows

In the spring when day's light and night's darkness are about equal in time, a historical and natural travel adventure starts within the saltwater of the Gulf of Maine far from the inland banks of the Exeter River. It is a well-known fact that fresh water flows downward through brooks, streams, ponds, and rivers to end up merging with the salt water of the ocean. Now at this time of year, a horde of 12-inch, silver-colored fish leave the sea in a reverse direction heading with force of purpose inland to the freshwater of their birthplace.

There are some unusual words that describe this special ecological event that play a part in this spring ritual: "alewife", "anadromous", and "estuary". Alewives are silvery, schooling fish that are part of the herring family. They live in saltwater and migrate long distances to spawn in freshwater. Alewives are a valued source of food, fish meal, and oil. Alewives are anadromous, meaning that they spend most of their life in saltwater, but return to freshwater as 3- or 4-year-old adults to spawn. An estuary is where the freshwaters from rivers and streams mix with saltwater from the ocean. Bays, tidal rivers, and salt marshes are estuaries in New Hampshire. The Exeter River Watershed is a part of the "Great Bay Estuary". The Great Bay Estuary covers 17 square miles with nearly 150 miles of tidal shoreline.

Between spawning migrations, the adult alewife can be found in the Atlantic Ocean near the Continental Shelf. The journey of tens of thousands of alewives begins in the Gulf of Maine. Picture them heading in through Portsmouth Harbor toward land. The large school begins to depart into different directions – some going north to the Cocheco River, some going west into Oyster River, some moving through Great Bay into Lamprey River, and another group heading south into the brackish Squamscott River and then the freshwater of the Exeter River. It is the alewives that arrive leaping up into the Exeter River that are the focus of this story.

The alewife is featured on the Exeter Town Seal owing to its importance to the community in Colonial times as a source of food and crop fertilizer. While alewives lack their former importance, they remind us of the important relationship between land use and water quality and the impacts of growth and development on area rivers and the Great Bay. In Exeter, the alewives make the leap from salt water to fresh water with the assistance of a NH Fish and Game fish ladder adjacent to the Great Dam in downtown Exeter. After spawning, the adults return to the ocean and the juvenile alewives linger in fresh and brackish streams before moving seaward in the fall. The increasing

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numbers of fish migrating to the Exeter River is cause for celebration.

To increase the awareness of the Exeter River Watershed and its relationship to the Great Bay Estuary, the Exeter River Local Advisory Committee with its members from the 10 watershed towns (Chester, Sandown, Danville, Fremont, Raymond, Brentwood, East Kingston, Kingston, Kensington and Exeter) sponsors the annual Exeter River Alewife Festival in Exeter. The festival brings together local community groups, business organizations, and government agencies to educate and reach out to Seacoast communities about land and water protection, management, and responsible use.

This article is brought to you by the membership of the Exeter River Local Advisory Committee (ERLAC) with the support of the N.H. Estuaries Project.

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PORTSMOUTH HERALD

Volunteers work to stem flow of river pollution

By David Johnson
news@seacoastonline.com

EXETER - Armed with orange, fluorescent vests and cans of spray paint, Exeter High School students, Exeter Rotarians, and Exeter River Local Advisory Committee members ventured through town a mission. On Saturday, the group stenciled "Don't Dump" signs next to storm drains, in an effort to squelch pollution to the Exeter and Squamscott rivers and educate the community about storm water runoff.

"We want to let people know what goes into the catch basins goes into the rivers," said Phyllis Duffy, an engineering technician with the Exeter Public Works Department.

Deposits into the marked catch basins empty into the two rivers, which pour into the Great Bay Estuary, and eventually flows into the Gulf of Maine. This process takes place in the Great Bay Estuary watershed.

The event represents a cooperative endeavor from Exeter Public Works and the University of New Hampshire Sea Grant. Both groups are operating on grants from the New Hampshire Estuaries Project. On the UNH side, the emphasis lies on education.

"The kids, the volunteers, learn a lot about storm water issues," said Julia Peterson, one of the coordinators for the event and a representative of the Sea Grant. "Through their activity, they help teach everyone else. It's a ripple effect."

The EPA designates Exeter, along with 44 other New Hampshire towns, as a Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). This label places the onus on the respective towns to maximize the reduction of pollutants that may affect the watershed. The responsibility of containing these pollutants is even greater with the Clean Water Act.

"This is another way the EPA gives smaller communities to help address cleaning the waterways," says Duffy.

As a result of the MS4 designation, Exeter is also given six requirements, two of which the town is able to fulfill with Saturday's events: public education and public involvement and participation. In the days prior, fliers and door-hangers, detailing the event and offering information on storm drain pollution were dispensed through town.

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"It's a nice idea for getting everyone in town exposed to these issues," says Duffy.

Peterson notes the need for clueing in the public; she feels that the mysticism of the storm-drain needs to be erased. What flows in the drain, she says, does not just disappear or magically go away.

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"There is no 'away,'" she says. "When you see something go into a storm drain, it goes into a neighboring body of water."

And with the upcoming Alewife Festival, on May 31, and the ceremonial upriver spawning of the alewives, Duffy notes the importance of keeping pollution out of the river. For several years, the alewives did not even make the trip "because it was so bad," says Duffy.

But with the help of Saturday's volunteers, and as a result, community members, Duffy, Peterson, and company hope to stymie the flow of pollution and bolster the purity of Exeter's rivers and the seas they affect.

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The Exeter News-Letter.



Mike White, left, and Dan Delvecchio, of Exeter, fish for striped bass during the Alewife Festival in Exeter on Saturday.

Staff photo by Jackie Ricciardi

Festival hails the alewife

By Julien Vernet

newsletter@seacoastonline.com

EXETER - After weeks of intermittent rainy weather, the sun came out on Saturday just in time for the annual Exeter River Alewife Festival in downtown Exeter. The event, celebrating the migration of alewives up the Exeter River to spawn, included activities and exhibits by historical societies, wildlife and preservation organizations and local artists.

Every year at the beginning of summer, alewives travel up the Exeter River using the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department's fish ladder. The returning fish are 3 to 6 years old and will return to the ocean immediately after spawning; the juveniles will return sometime between August and October.

Theresa Walker, an organizer with the Rockingham Planning Commission, was ecstatic about the crowds attending the festival, which last year had to be canceled - because of snow.

"Last year was a nonevent, so we're so pleased the weather is holding off and

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people are coming out to learn about the river," Walker said.

Although the alewife is pictured on the Exeter town seal, its significance there is ambiguous.

"The seal shows the alewife and there is questionable evidence that the alewife saved the first settlers from starvation," said Don Clement, chairman of the Exeter River Advisory Committee. "But that's questionable because it's not exactly a great eating fish."

Cathy Duffy, of the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, hosted an "Avian Adventures" exhibit at the festival, an educational presentation on birds. She described the attributes of a live bard owl that had been brought in from Audubon's Silk Farm facility in Concord.

"If we put this owl on the home plate in Fenway Park, and you were reading a newspaper in the outfield, it could read the words on the front page," Duffy said.

At his booth, Matthew Tarr, a forester with the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, explained the relationship between the river ecosystem and local wildlife.

"I'm showing folks a sample of different habitats in the Exeter River watershed," he said. "Sometimes we don't realize that the river provides a home for wood turtles, river otters and kingfish."

Festival participants took part in activities and expressed their support for local preservation efforts.

"This community needs to clean up this area so our future generations can enjoy it," said Leigh Burney, an Exeter resident attending the event with her two sons, Steven, 11, and Lucas, 8.

Other activities at the festival included canoe and kayak races, tours of the N.H. Fish and Game fish ladder, wildlife and preservation exhibits and live music.

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Annual Exeter River festival hails the alewife

By Julien Vernet

hamptonunion@seacoastonline.com

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Other activities at the festival included canoe and kayak races, tours of the N.H. Fish and Game fish ladder, wildlife and preservation exhibits and live music.

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Seacoast finds a silent unifier in Exeter River

At this time of year, with snow and ice covering much of the land and waterways, we may not easily notice the Exeter River alongside the road or as we pass over a bridge. But it is present, seen only as black spots here and there. It is moving its water in the 21st century much as it did in the 17th century. It is a valuable natural resource that wanders 33 miles from Chester to Exeter in a snake-like fashion, through towns with ever-growing populations and housing developments.

The Exeter River Watershed covers an area of about 67,700 acres in Rockingham County. A watershed is the land that water flows across or under on its way to a river or lake. The Exeter River Watershed includes sizable portions of 10 municipalities, comprising Chester, Sandown, Danville, Fremont, Raymond, Brentwood, East Kingston, Kingston, Kensington, and Exeter. The river is a source of drinking water, supports a wide variety of plant and animal life, and provides many recreational activities. There are 17 smaller rivers and streams flowing into the Exeter River and 10 ponds draining into the watershed. There are 41 dams located along the Exeter River and its tributaries.

With the support of numerous residents and organizations, the Exeter River was added to the State of New Hampshire's Rivers Management Protection Program in August 1995. The purpose of the program is to protect our state's significant river resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Exeter River Local Advisory Committee (commonly known as ERLAC) was established in 1996 to oversee the development and implementation of an Exeter River Management Plan. Committee members, then and now, are residents from the 10 watershed communities working together to protect and maintain the river's natural character. The committee meets once a month and the general public is always invited to join.

In addition to river protection activities, ERLAC has designed many public education and outreach programs to increase awareness of the natural resources in the watershed, including the Annual Exeter River Alewife Festival, which will be held May 31 along Swasey Parkway in downtown Exeter.

The Exeter River connects communities by water, and residents of those communities can connect to this great river by supporting and attending the various community programs sponsored by ERLAC.

If you want more information about the Exeter River, please call ERLAC at the Rockingham Planning Commission, at 778-0885.

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The Exeter News-Letter.

History flows in Exeter River

By Elisabeth (Betsy) Sanders

Since the 1630s, the Exeter River has attracted people to its forests and waters because it represents an important natural resource. The river links the present with an interesting historical story of the early settlers as they moved west along the river from Exeter to Brentwood, Fremont, Raymond, Danville, Sandown and Chester. The river provided a source of good water, fish for food and a travel route westward.

Simple manpower was slow, and a faster method to saw timber and grind grain was needed to maintain a comfortable lifestyle and to support a growing population. The power to meet the need for shelter, furniture, fuel, and other wood and grain products was found in the freshwater river (Exeter) that drained some 34 miles from Chester to the Great Falls and in the saltwater river (Squamscott) at Exeter. Waterpower from the Exeter River was the answer to building and establishing new lands as well as enriching the economy. The importance of sawmills to replace work by hand and the need for waterpower for gristmills had a positive impact on the daily lives of the 18th-century settlements.

The history of the mills along the Exeter River dates back to 1639 and the early 1700s when sawmills and gristmills were built in Exeter, Brentwood, Fremont, Raymond, Sandown and Chester. The mill privileges were granted to individuals by the town proprietors and an appointed committee. Mill sites were selected by finding a waterfall high enough in the river that could be dammed to have an adequate amount of water to move a waterwheel. Those individuals who received the mill grants were then required to clear land around the mill site, build and operate the mill. The mills have long vanished from our Exeter River landscape and the previous mill occupations are obsolete. Knowing some small snippets about the old mills may stir a renewed interest about the care of our wandering river.

The Rev. Samuel Dudley and John Legat built a sawmill at Brentwood's Pickpocket Falls in 1652. This mill was located near the Exeter town line. Brentwood was separated from Exeter in 1742, the river was the main boundary for about half a mile and one half of Pickpocket Falls was assigned to each town. In 1786, the present boundary was established and Brentwood claimed the Pickpocket Mill.

Also in Brentwood, Robert Steward and Thomas Crawley built a sawmill in 1652 at what is now known as Crawley's Falls. Apparently, Thomas Crawley

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fell into the falls and drowned, thus the falls carry his name to this day. Crawley's Falls had three dams and was a busy center with various mill types.

In Brentwood, near the Fremont town line, the Copyhold Mills was run by different owners, each sharing defined days for their use of the mills. The Copyhold Saw Mill was the scene of one of the earliest recorded acts of rebellion against the British - "The Mast Tree Riot" of 1734. There is a New Hampshire Historic Marker at the corner of Route 107 and Route 111A in Fremont detailing this historic event.

Moving on to Fremont (originally known as Poplin), the Black Rocks Mills were built on both sides of the river to serve as grist- and sawmills. The mill and privilege was once owned by Spaulding and Frost Cooperage who were famous for their white pine barrels.

About 1753, Daniel Ladd purchased both a sawmill and gristmill on the Exeter River in Fremont, now known as the "Cavil" or "Turner's" mill site. This mill area found on Scribner Road in Fremont was once filled with floating logs to be cut at the mill, and today is a favorite fishing and boating spot.

In Sandown in the 1760s, the Exeter River supported several mills. The first mills inside the Sandown town line were the Hook's Mill, the Sanborn Mill and the Fuller's Mill. Near the Sandown and Chester town line, the Hazelton Mill was established in Well's Village. In 1721, the proprietors of Chester voted to grant Col. Packer, Col. Wiar, Caleb Towle and Samuel Ingalls the privilege to build a sawmill or mills.

The Exeter River finds its beginning (or maybe its end) in Chester in a brook near the North Pond. The North Pond was once a holding area for logs that would be floated downstream to the sawmill operations at the Dale Mill, the Edwards Mill and the Towle Mill.

Now in the 21st century, the Exeter River finds the ponds and river empty of logs to be cut, the mills all but vanished and silent, and the trails along the river overgrown and forgotten. The towns and villages along the Exeter River are no longer dependent upon themselves for their basic necessities. The demand for power from the river has changed to a demand for home sites, recreation and drinking water supplies.

Olive Tardiff has given permission to quote the last paragraph of her book "The Exeter-Squamscott: River of Many Uses": "The Exeter-Squamscott will be here long after the last resident has departed, just as it was here long before man came. Whether it can return to its pristine state is a question we must all address. Perhaps an understanding of its gifts to us over the centuries and the debt we owe it will encourage us to preserve this priceless heritage for the generations to come."

This article is brought to you by the membership of the Exeter River Local Advisory Committee (ERLAC) with the support of the N.H. Estuaries Project. The members of ERLAC meet monthly and discuss issues about the Exeter River concerning water quantity and quality; wildlife habitats and natural communities; scenic, recreation and historic resources; and education and outreach. For information about the Exeter River, call ERLAC at the Rockingham Planning Commission at 778-0885.

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Exeter waterway fueled economy through years

By Betsy Sanders

Since the 1630s, the Exeter River has attracted people to its forests and waters because it represents an important natural resource. The river links the present with an interesting historical story of the early settlers as they moved west along the river from Exeter to Brentwood, Fremont, Raymond, Danville, Sandown and Chester. The river provided a source of good water, fish for food and a travel route westward.

Simple manpower was slow, and a faster method to saw timber and grind grain was needed to maintain a comfortable lifestyle and to support a growing population. The power to meet the need for shelter, furniture, fuel, and other wood and grain products was found in the freshwater river (Exeter) that drained some 34 miles from Chester to the Great Falls and in the saltwater river (Squamscott) at Exeter. Waterpower from the Exeter River was the answer to building and establishing new lands as well as enriching the economy. The importance of sawmills to replace work by hand and the need for waterpower for gristmills had a positive impact on the daily lives of the 18th-century settlements.

The history of the mills along the Exeter River dates back to 1639 and the early 1700s when sawmills and gristmills were built in Exeter, Brentwood, Fremont, Raymond, Sandown and Chester. The mill privileges were granted to individuals by the town proprietors and an appointed committee. Mill sites were selected by finding a waterfall high enough in the river that could be dammed to have an adequate amount of water to move a waterwheel. Those individuals who received the mill grants were then required to clear land around the mill site, build and operate the mill. The mills have long vanished from our Exeter River landscape and the previous mill occupations are obsolete. Knowing some small snippets about the old mills may stir a renewed interest about the care of our wandering river.

The Rev. Samuel Dudley and John Legat built a sawmill at Brentwood's Pickpocket Falls in 1652. This mill was located near the Exeter town line. Brentwood was separated from Exeter in 1742, the river was the main boundary for about half a mile and one half of Pickpocket Falls was assigned to each town. In 1786, the present boundary was established and Brentwood claimed the Pickpocket Mill.

Also in Brentwood, Robert Steward and Thomas Crawley built a sawmill in 1652 at what is now known as Crawley's Falls. Apparently, Thomas Crawley fell into the falls and drowned, thus the falls carry his name to this day. Crawley's Falls had three dams and was a busy center with various mill types.

In Brentwood, near the Fremont town line, the Copyhold Mills was run by different owners, each sharing defined days for their use of the mills. The Copyhold Saw Mill was the scene of one of the earliest recorded acts of rebellion against the British - "The Mast Tree Riot" of 1734. There is a New

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Hampshire Historic Marker at the corner of Route 107 and Route 111A in Fremont detailing this historic event.

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Moving on to Fremont (originally known as Poplin), the Black Rocks Mills were built on both sides of the river to serve as grist- and sawmills. The mill and privilege was once owned by Spaulding and Frost Cooperage who were famous for their white pine barrels.

About 1753, Daniel Ladd purchased both a sawmill and gristmill on the Exeter River in Fremont, now known as the "Cavil" or "Turner's" mill site. This mill area found on Scribner Road in Fremont was once filled with floating logs to be cut at the mill, and today is a favorite fishing and boating spot.

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In Sandown in the 1760s, the Exeter River supported several mills. The first mills inside the Sandown town line were the Hook's Mill, the Sanborn Mill and the Fuller's Mill. Near the Sandown and Chester town line, the Hazelton Mill was established in Well's Village. In 1721, the proprietors of Chester voted to grant Col. Packer, Col. Wiar, Caleb Towle and Samuel Ingalls the privilege to build a sawmill or mills.

The Exeter River finds its beginning (or maybe its end) in Chester in a brook near the North Pond. The North Pond was once a holding area for logs that would be floated downstream to the sawmill operations at the Dale Mill, the Edwards Mill and the Towle Mill.

Now in the 21st century, the Exeter River finds the ponds and river empty of logs to be cut, the mills all but vanished and silent, and the trails along the river overgrown and forgotten. The towns and villages along the Exeter River are no longer dependent upon themselves for their basic necessities. The demand for power from the river has changed to a demand for home sites, recreation and drinking water supplies.

Olive Tardiff has given permission to quote the last paragraph of her book "The Exeter-Squamscott: River of Many Uses": "The Exeter-Squamscott will be here long after the last resident has departed, just as it was here long before man came. Whether it can return to its pristine state is a question we must all address. Perhaps an understanding of its gifts to us over the centuries and the debt we owe it will encourage us to preserve this priceless heritage for the generations to come."

This article is brought to you by the membership of the Exeter River Local Advisory Committee (ERLAC) with the support of the N.H. Estuaries Project. The members of ERLAC meet monthly and discuss issues about the Exeter River concerning water quantity and quality; wildlife habitats and natural communities; scenic, recreation and historic resources; and education and outreach. For information about the Exeter River, call ERLAC at the Rockingham Planning Commission at 778-0885.

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The Exeter News-Letter.



Betsy Sanders.
Staff photo by Sarah Zenewicz

A walk in the woods

By Rachel Forrest
currents@seacoastonline.com

If you take a walk in the woods in Danville, Betsy Sanders might be nearby. She spends a lot of time in the woods. The former senior vice president at the Bank of New England has been retired for almost seven years, but she's never been busier now that she spends her time working to conserve land and wildlife in Rockingham County.

Sanders is, among other things, the Danville representative of the Exeter River local advisory committee, on the board of directors and current treasurer of the Rockingham County Land Trust, the chair of the Danville Forestry Committee and an elected member of the Danville Budget Committee.

And it all started with some trees. After her retirement from the banking industry, Sanders, who has lived in the same home in Danville with her husband Alan since 1975, started her volunteer career in 1999 when the Danville town forester died.

"I enjoy forest walks and it seemed a shame that there'd be no one to take care of it," Sanders explained. Through some research she discovered that there

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was a statute governing town forests that stipulates that if there is a town forest it should be managed by a committee.

"I didn't know a tree from a tree," Sanders laughs, "but I could do secretarial work, and I don't give up on something I believe in."

So she formed the Danville Forestry Committee, a group of three people that has recently been expanded. The original group, which included herself, Paul Collins and Andy Ward, did historical research on the forest. They also had the pleasure of walking around and identifying trees.

There were 115 acres of town forest at the time but the group was able to get 477 acres of the total 7,000 acres in Danville designated as town forest to be managed by the committee. The group has also developed a forest stewardship plan.

"We're all consumers of wood products," Sanders notes, "and we need to preserve the forest." Some town forests are even tree farms.

The group was able to raise \$9,000 to develop the plan, \$4,400 of which came from a private trust left by Lester Colby in his will in 1947.

"Although he was blind, he had great vision for Danville," Sanders says.

The money was to be used to manage the town forest, and now it's being put to its intended use, by funding a forestry management plan prepared by consulting forester Charles Moreno.

Sanders also works on the Exeter River Committee and is one of the people responsible for the annual Alewife Festival. There are 34 miles of the Exeter River from Chester to Exeter, and Sanders loves to conduct workshops to help kids and adults learn about the river.

"The fun part is the education and outreach," Sanders explains. "We have a vernal pool workshop in the spring, educate at the Alewife festival, and we also do the Wet, Wild, and Woolly Workshop." The workshops teaches about local wildlife. And each winter she conducts a snowshoe walk in Danville.

In Exeter she takes out groups to inspect the trees, and she trains youth about wildlife and conservation at Sandy Point Discovery Center in Stratham and in the local elementary schools.

She also works with Project Learning Tree, a state program that educates children about ecology and conservation. Part of the group's mission is to use New Hampshire's forests "to enhance student understanding and appreciation of the ecological, social and economic values of our natural resources."

Sanders sees education as being an extremely important part of her work. "People want to learn. They really care about education, about forests and wetlands."

She notes that the UNH Cooperative Extension had been an indispensable part of educating people about wildlife and conservation. The extension conducts a four-day Woodlot and Wildlife Management course where people can learn about forest history, tree identification, forest ecology and wildlife management. Phil Auger, former Rockingham County forester, and who worked with the Danville forestry committee five years ago when the forest management plan was first being considered, is one of the many instructors.

"The most beneficial thing is education," she says. "People understand through education."

And people are more eager to help with conservation and reporting of wildlife when they're educated about it. "People call me about wildlife they see all the time," Sanders says. "They'll call me about a run-over snake or a turtle they've seen, and I'll try to identify it."

Sanders is one of the few people who is fortunate enough to have seen not one but two rare Blanding's turtles, through her work as a volunteer with the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department's Reptile and Amphibian Reporting Program. Tracking and reporting these creatures is a first step in saving a species.

Sanders is glad to be a part of the many organizations with which she works. "There are so many great people and programs and organizations that do so much for the state of New Hampshire."

And it all started with a love of walking in the woods. Although, Sanders admits "I have no sense of direction. My husband gave me a great walking stick with a compass on top."

And she can use it to guide the many people who want to learn about conserving our land and wildlife, and those who want to volunteer.

As Betsy Sanders says, "We're not working for today, we're working for 50 to 100 years from now."

You can call Betsy Sanders at 642-5070 to find out how to volunteer.

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Showcase Magazine - Fairs & Festivals

Thursday, May 29, 2003



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Something fishy is afoot in Exeter: Alewife Festival returns on Saturday

By TERRY DATE

Democrat Staff Writer

EXETER — This weekend, a local festival will celebrate the noble alewife and the waters it swims.

Visitors to the Exeter River Alewife Festival on Saturday will have a chance to see migrating alewives and other fish, and learn about the river.

Organizers selected the fish to symbolize the event because of the alewife's important place in the town's history and its connection to salt and fresh water, an event organizer said before last year's festival.

While alewives spawn in fresh water, they spend the rest of their lives at sea, the organizer said.



Courtesy image

The fresh water Exeter River meets the brackish waters of the Squamscott River at the Great Dam in town.

The festival is being presented by the Exeter River Local Advisory Committee, a citizen's group with representatives from the Exeter River watershed towns.

The committee works to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, and scenic, recreational and historic resources through education and collaboration with other organizations and communities.

The following is the schedule of events:

From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., listen to a musical performance by The Other Guys; at 10 a.m., tour the New Hampshire Fish and Game Ladder located next to the Dam View Restaurant; also at 10 a.m. kayak and canoe race registration starts; at 11 a.m., Wet, Wild and Woolly, Wildlife Habitat in the Exeter River Watershed, presented by Matthew Tarr, UNH Cooperative Extension Service.

At noon is the Exeter River Steward Award presentation and unveiling of the 1835 historical map of the Exeter River; at 1 p.m. the canoe and kayak race begins; also at 1 p.m. Avian Adventures presented by the Audubon Society of New Hampshire; and at 2 p.m., tour the New Hampshire Fish and Game Ladder.

For information, call the Exeter River Advisory Committee at 778-0885.

Participants in the festival are the American Independence Museum, the Audubon Society of NH, artist and naturalist David Carroll, the Exeter Center for Creative Arts, the Exeter Historical Society, the Exeter River Local Advisory Committee, the Exeter Powder House, Great Bay Coast Watch, the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership, author Jack Noon, LifeWise Community Projects, historian Matthew Thomas, the NH Department of Environmental Services, the NH Estuaries Project, NH Fish and Game, NH Office of State Planning, NH Rivers Council, Project Nature, Rockingham Land Trust, the Rockingham Planning Commission, Sandy Point Discovery Center, the Seacoast Arts Association, The Gundalow Company, the Town of Exeter Dept. of Public Works, Trout Unlimited, UNH Cooperative Extension and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Festival supporters are Cathy Arakelian, the NH Estuaries Project, the NH Office of State Planning, the NH Department of Environmental Services, Peter Olney, the Rockingham Planning Commission, Squamscott Press, the Timberland Co. and JoAnne Trahan.

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